



### Paper Depot finds little difference between employees

Paper Depot is a small retailer of fine papers in Minneapolis, Minnesota specializing in invitations. Paper Depot allows customers to create the invitations themselves on-site. Owner, Mark Pupeza, purchased Paper Depot from his family at a young age and has grown the company over the last 21 years. Paper Depot employs many people who have disabilities.

A personal experience with chronic depression helped Pupeza realize how disabilities rarely affect a person's ability to accomplish work. Believing that work ethic is not negatively associated with a person's disability, Pupeza describes his employees who have disabilities as having a strong work ethic that leads to loyalty and dedication.

Finding candidates who have disabilities is easy for Paper Depot. Pupeza utilizes the Vocational Rehabilitation Business Service Specialist in his region to fulfill some of his workforce needs. He describes the program as having a vested interest for all parties.

"There are real benefits of working with the Vocational Service Specialist" Pupeza says. "The relationship is low risk in that I have no real obligations or costs, but I gain loyal employees."

Any accommodations Pupeza has needed to implement have been minimal and typically not any different than employees who do not have a disability. He cites an example of an employee who has a condition that prevents her from standing for long periods of time. The simple solution was to provide a stool at the counter and limit the length of her shifts.

There are other employees who also have shorter shifts because of school children, second jobs, their own schooling and any number of other reasons. For Pupeza, all employees who need schedule accommodations are the same, regardless of the reason.

Pupeza makes comparisons between employees to make his point about how people who have disabilities do not really require, nor are they asking for, special treatment. All employees need time off periodically for doctor or dental appointments, and an appointment for a therapist is not any different. He describes how we all encounter human conditions affecting our lives, including work, and adjustments are always needed.

Pupeza maintains that the way his workforce is managed has not changed because of hiring people who have disabilities. Most employees are unaware of another employee's conditions including Pupeza. The rare employee squabble is handled with conversations that promote understanding – and a friendly reminder that we all need accommodations once in awhile.